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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000972

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: P-5 AMBASSADORS VISIT MAOIST CANTONMENTS

REF: KATHMANDU 0958

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary. During an October 23 visit to a Maoist cantonment in eastern Nepal, the P-5 plus Japan chiefs of mission underscored UNSC support for the Nepali peace process and called for the rapid discharge, integration, and rehabilitation of Maoist combatants. The Maoist Division Commander said his party was willing to discharge the 4,008 disqualified combatants -- many considered child soldiers -- but wants generous financial incentives for their reintegration into society. The Commander called for integration of Maoist combatants by unit and refused to consider integration into the police forces, both positions sharply at odds with those of the Nepal Army and many independent experts. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On October 23, the Ambassadors and Charge d'Affaires from France, China, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and United States, accompanied by the Representative of the UN Secretary General Karin Landgren, visited the Nepal Army (NA) Weapons Store at Chhauni near Kathmandu, and the Maoist Cantonment Site 1 at Chulachuli in eastern Nepal. DATT accompanied U.S. Charge. The visit was the first collective visit by Security Council Ambassadors to a Maoist cantonment. The delegation met with the UNMIN arms monitors, the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) Division Commander, and a group of nine women PLA combatants. The delegation issued a joint press release following the visit (emailed to SCA/INS).

Nepal Army Weapons Store

13. (C) In a largely symbolic stop, the delegation first visited the Nepal Army Weapons Store at Chhauni near Kathmandu, where they viewed 13 containers of Nepal Army weapons. The UNMIN monitors and NA Director of Military Intelligence briefed the delegation on the arms monitoring procedures. (Comment: The monitoring of the NA weapons has not been in dispute during the peace process, and the visit to the NA weapons store was designed to demonstrate "balance" prior to the visit to the Maoist cantonment. End comment.)

Maoist Cantonment

¶4. (C) The delegation then visited the Maoist Chulachuli cantonment in the eastern Terai (near Darjeeling), which holds 1,973 Maoist combatants, including approximately 900 who were disqualified by the UN. (Note: This ratio of verified to disqualified combatants is unusually high in this camp, as the total number of "verified" Maoist combatants in the country is 19,602, and disqualified is only 4,008. End note.) Conditions in the camp were good, better than many NA camps according to DATT, with hard structures and cement floors. The Maoist combatants wore military uniform and appeared well-fed and healthy. Many appeared very young. UNMIN monitors from Japan, Nigeria, Egypt, and Jordan, briefed the delegation on the arms monitoring process. UNMIN underscored that its mandate is limited to the monitoring of arms, not personnel in the camp. The delegation met with the Maoist Division Commander for nearly an hour, as well as his three battalion-level commanders. Known as a hard-liner, the Division Commander, speaking in Nepali, was articulate and effectively presented the Maoist party line on military issues.

Integration Into Army Top Priority

¶5. (C) U.S. Charge asked about the specific steps and timeline for integrating and rehabilitating the Maoist combatants into the Nepal security forces. The Commander said political parties, through the Technical and Special Committees, would decide integration and rehabilitation issues. The Maoists expected to be integrated first at the commander level, then the "unified" command structure would

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decide on integration at lower levels of the Nepal Army. The Maoists insist on "some kind of unit integration," not individual integration.

¶6. (C) The Maoists expect to be integrated into the Army only, not the Nepal Police or Armed Police (note: even though the Comprehensive Peace Agreement calls for integration into undefined "security forces"). The Commander noted that the two armies stored their weapons, declared a cease-fire, and thus two armies must be integrated. The police did not store their weapons. In response to the French Ambassador's point that the Nepal Army is already oversized, the Commander said that downsizing will have to take place after integration.

Committed to Discharge but Vague on Details

¶7. (C) Asked about the discharge of the disqualified Maoist combatants, the Division Commander said that the Maoists were committed to the discharge and could move quickly, but stressed the disqualified combatants should be discharged "in accordance with their will." They cannot be sent home with "nothing." The discharged combatants fought for Nepal and should receive jobs and "financial assistance." The combatants come from poor areas, and many have no homes. They want business opportunities and education. The French Ambassador and U.S. Charge pressed the Commander to explain the next steps on the discharge process, but the Commander only said that the Technical Committee was responsible for interviewing the disqualified combatants and that process was "ongoing" (reftel).

What Special Committee Supervision?

¶8. (C) UK Ambassador noted that under the peace agreements the Special Committee on Integration and Rehabilitation "supervises" the Maoists in the cantonments. He asked the Division Commander about the Committee's supervision role over the Maoist combatants. The Division Commander frankly said that he receives no instructions from the Special Committee and takes orders only from his Maoist superiors. To implement the supervision of the combatants, he said that the political leaders must create a mechanism at the "top level," then they will implement the command structures in the field.

Female Combatants Toe Party Line

¶9. (C) In a separate meeting with nine women Maoist combatants, the woman battalion-level commander told the delegation that the previous government did not respect the equal rights of Nepali women. Maoist women combatants wanted the same level of integration into the Nepal Army as men. When asked by U.S. Charge what they want to be doing in five years, all the women combatants stated that they wanted to be integrated into the Nepal army and wanted to make Nepal a better place. Besides the Maoist women combatants, the delegation did not have an opportunity to interact with other Maoist combatants at the camp.

Comment: Long Way to Go

¶10. (C) The P-5 plus Japan visit offered another opportunity to underscore UNSC concerns about the slow pace of the Nepali peace process. The Division Commander's comments with regard to discharge of the disqualified were somewhat encouraging, but the refusal to consider integration into the police and the insistence on unit integration were disappointing.
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